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FOLK-LORE SCRAP-BOOK.

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS IN NEWFOUNDLAND.—In one of a series of articles, entitled “The Folk-Lore of Newfoundland and Labrador,” appearing in “The Evening Herald,” St. John’s, Newfoundland (December 29, 1892), Rev. Arthur C. Waghorne discusses Christmas Customs about New Harbor, N. F., which either continue to prevail, or have been only lately disused: —

“1. This season is a popular one for weddings; this is so, I believe, to a certain extent, throughout the country.

“2. The old custom still prevails, to some extent, of having some new garment at Christmas; at Scilly Cove, it seems, also at New Year.

“3. At Fogo the custom appears to be to light bonfires on Christmas Eve.

“4. Till late years the twelve days of Christmas were kept as entire holidays as far as possible, at least by many. Enough wood was cut up and stowed away to last till the Epiphany; even now many do so up to New Year’s Day. This is an old English custom. The Monday after the Epiphany was called by country folks, in the old times, ‘Plough Monday,’ as they then returned to their usual labors, after the festivities of Christmas; devoting the morning of that Monday to overhauling and getting into good order their ploughs and other agricultural implements, and the rest of the day to a final frolic.

“5. Houses are subjected to a general clean up, papered and white-washed; so, too, on the Labrador.

“6. Christmas presents or boxes, carefully concealed from the notice of those for whom they are intended, were probably much more common (like many other customs, good and bad) in former days, here and on the Labrador, than they are now.

“7. As each family finished supper on Christmas Eve, one of the men of the house would fire off a gun. So too after the Christmas dinner. Mr. Whittle mentions the latter custom as prevailing in St. John’s fifty years ago. Very few guns were heard about here this Christmas Eve.

“8. In very few cases indeed have I heard of any evergreens decorating the houses, as is so common in England at this season. The family Christmas-tree, so popular amongst the children in the old country, and universal in Germany, seems, in this neighborhood, quite unknown.

“9. The Christmas decoration of our churches does not appear to have been anything so common as in England, though here and there it seems to have been done.”

CHRISTMAS “FOOLS” AND “MUMMERS” IN NEWFOUNDLAND.—From an article by Mr. William Whittle, contained in the “Telegram and Colonist,” N. F., Christmas number, 1886 or 1887, is cited in the series of papers mentioned, an account of a local observance appearing on its face to be a survival, but not known to be recorded as observed in England: —

“The laboring classes in those days had enlarged privileges granted

them, if not by positive law, at least by well-established custom. So, folly was, as it were, 'crowned, and disorder had a license.'

"The younger generation remember the 'fools.' Their time of appearing out was from Christmas Day to Twelfth Day. They had full sway until the disguise was made a cloak by which to revenge some petty spite. Then they were ordered to be numbered, and finally were allowed out only on condition that they should appear unmasked. This was the command that terminated this old custom in St. John's. It was not, I believe, a statutory law, but merely the will of a stipendiary magistrate, the late Mr. Justice Carter. Some years after they had ceased to appear, one came out on the 'Cross' on Christmas Day. He struck right and left, and finally ran into the arms of a policeman who locked him up. I remember, some years ago, just about Christmas time, one of my brothers, who was quite a genius in that line, making a full-rigged brig, and giving it to a person who was to be a 'fool' on New Year's Day, to be used in the decoration of his cap, with the understanding that the brig was to be mine at the end of the day. Well, bright and early on New Year's morning I presented myself at the door of the 'fool' fully two hours before the hour come for him to dress. Finally out he came, 'dressed to kill,' or 'mash,' as the saying goes now. His milk-white shirt sleeves were literally covered with ribbons; his pantaloons were of the heaviest broadcloth; and his cap surmounted with my coveted prize,—the full-rigged brig. Down Limekiln-hill he went with the fleetness of a deer,—and there was method in this, as he was anxious that few should know where he emerged from. And down I went after him.

"Up Playhouse-Hill he ran until his eyes lit on some one, who, like himself, was swift afoot. Then commenced the chase. Up lanes, 'across lots,' down lanes, in and out of the crowd, until the person chased sought shelter in some hall-way. Yet his haven was not secure, for, with his shoulder against the door, the 'fool' was determined that it should yield. Then came a critical moment, for I saw an impending danger to the spars of the brig; then came the cry and warning, 'Stoop! Stoop!' He obeys the command, the door is forced open, the victim secured, a few friendly taps on the legs, and they shake hands and walk out together. From Playhouse-Hill to the Mall, from the Mall to the Tickle, many times that day did I follow that 'fool.' Wherever the crowd was greatest there was I, like Mr. Fezziwig in Dickens's 'Christmas Carol,' in their midst. At last, late at night, when the 'fool,' weary, tired, all 'played out,' sought his home, I was made the happy owner of the full-rigged brig. How well they kept from each other the knowledge of what each other was to wear! Odd costumes were discussed for weeks on street corners, at firesides, and at friendly parties, but each one kept his secret in regard to his own dress. And it is safe to say, no belle ever dressed for the 'Irish ball' that had as many come to criticise her taste or admire her appearance as a popular 'fool' had. 'Munn' Carter, I remember, was always a conspicuous 'fool,' and one who could handle himself well, for Munn was a fellow whom every would-be boxer did not want to tackle. Davey Foley was always the owner of a stylish rig, while his friend, Mosey Murphy, appeared, I think, as an

'owen-shook.' The 'owen-shook' was always a terror to encounter, for he rarely was merciful to any one who made him draw upon his wind, and woe to the man who disputed his right of giving a sound castigation for the trouble incurred."

Mr. Whittle also alludes to the common English custom of the "Mummers" or Maskers:—

"Those who did not live previous to the 'Fire' (1846) never saw this grand celebration, when some two or three hundred of the most stalwart fellows that ever trod the deck of ship donned their silk dresses, their costly bonnets and rich laces, and, marshalled by their escorts, promenaded the streets, calling upon the governor, the clergy, and the mercantile fraternity. So important were these celebrations deemed by our ancestors, and such was the earnestness bestowed upon their preparation, that the most costly garments were loaned from the wardrobes of the 'finest ladies in the land' for that purpose.

"The reign of the Mummers, like that of the 'fools' was put an end to, owing to a street row between them and the spectators, in which the latter received the worst of it. 'For, as I have said, both the 'fools' and mummers were composed of the 'bone and sinew' of the town. Many a time I have seen a 'fool' whom the mob tried to 'run,' pull off his cap, take the handle of his 'swab' and clean out some two or three hundred persons. Those were occasions when the spectators calculated without their host. Instead of a 'clark' being behind the disguise, it proved to be a Jackman, a Dawney, or a Curtin! But, as to the mummers. The 'fools' escorting the ladies were attired in blue trousers, with gold or red stripes on the sides, their white shirts completely covered with artificial flowers and ribbons, while from their sides hung swords which were loaned them from the barracks for the occasion. Young men and boys, as ladies dressed, often extravagantly, were thus escorted through the streets. One of the older customs was to drag a yule-log along with them. The procession invariably started from the Custom-house, in recent years, and after marching through the principal streets, put up at the house of Bill Cody, who lived in the direction of Riverhead Bridge, for dinner, where the wassail-bowl was drawn upon, and many a bumper drunk to Father Christmas."

SUPERSTITIONS IN THE ISLE OF MAN.—In the "Hartford Times," December 9, 1892, Edgar L. Wakeman gives an account of superstitions in this island, as observed by himself, from which are taken the following paragraphs:—

"Fairy doctors and hermits are still popular in the little island. In olden times the person and home, usually a cave, of the Manx hermit were so venerated that the person of a mortal enemy was sacred against harm when in a hermit's presence. These canny old loafers are no longer proof against skepticism, but they are well liked by the peasantry who hospitably tolerate them. I have made the acquaintance of several. One was in quite a despondent mood and threatened to leave his vocation forever. He admitted that the countryside people were friendly enough; but the